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V- Kraslow, David
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LBJ Plea Is Seen To Save Tshombe From Execution

By DAVID KRASLOW
Special to The Post

Washington—President Johnson has decided to intercede privately with Congolese President Joseph Mobutu to try to save the life of former Congolese Premier Moise Tshombe.

This was learned yesterday after Algeria's Supreme Court voted to approve the Congo's request for the extradition of Tshombe.

Tshombe was condemned to death by a military court in absentia last March 13 on a charge of treason and he faces the prospect of execution by a firing squad upon his return to the Congo.

Johnson will not appeal to Mobutu, it was understood, unless the execution appears imminent. Although Mobutu was behind Tshombe's ouster in October, 1965, and the treason trial, he could commute the sentence.

However, a statement by Mobutu in Kinshasa after the Algerian verdict was announced raised doubt whether he would be lenient. Mobutu said Tshombe had been sentenced by the Congolese courts and "for us he is a dead man."

Johnson's appeal would be based primarily on humanitarian grounds. It is expected the President also would advise Mobutu that Tshombe's execution would unduly arouse political passions in a country that has been sundered by rebellion and economic chaos almost from the time it obtained independence from Belgium in 1960.

Tshombe Accuses CIA

Ironically, before the court announced its ruling in Algiers, Tshombe told the judges: "I'm the victim of an American CIA plot."

Asked about Tshombe's claim, State Dept. spokesman Robert J. McCloskey said: "There is statement."

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